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ABSTRACT

The Proactive Action Model (PAM) is an approach to social studies education that involves students directly in research-type activities. Using the PAM technique, students may research a variety of social studies topics and follow a logical process of thought and inquiry towards a tangible product such as a report or presentation. This application of the "scientific method" to social studies curricula allows students to develop broadly applicable skills of critical thinking, organization, goal-setting, and decision-making. The PAM approach may be used for students in grades K-12 for either individual or group projects and also is a useful tool for teacher inservice training. This report outlines the goals and characteristics of the PAM model. It traces the development of the techniques since its creation in 1978. Numerous charts illustrate the logic behind the PAM, and extensive examples explain how the PAM may be applied in classroom situations. Additionally, references to several documents provide further information about the PAM technique. (CK)

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THOUGHT ACTION NETWORK

ED 377 113

USING THE PROACTIVE ACTION MODEL (PAM) TO ENHANCE STUDENT INQUIRY IN SOCIAL STUDIES EDUCATION: From 1978 to the Dawn of the 21st Century

Richard Peters, Ed.D.

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PART I THE PROACTIVE ACTION MODEL (PAM)

PART II THE SCHEMA NEXUS

PART III PAM IN ACTION

PART I THE PROACTIVE ACTION MODEL (PAM)

In November 1994, at the 74th Annual Conference of the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS), this author will discuss the CULTURAL AWARENESS PROGRAM (CAP) and the role that the PAM process plays in student inquiry. The presentation is entitled: Culture Literate Students and the Global Lifespace Environment.

The importance of PAM to social studies education is that the process directly involves students in research-type activities - in classrooms and at field-based sites.

Using PAM, students apply the 'scientific method' to social studies projects, and develop research-type skills that can be applied again-and-again in other courses and situations.

PAM is also a handy tool for teacher inservice training. Classroom teachers can be introduced to PAM activities and can develop the types of skills required of students. By experiencing the types of activities that students will encounter across the K-12 social studies curriculum, teachers will possess first-hand experience and can easily relate to what students are experiencing.

PAM can be used with cooperative groups - as teams explore and discover. Students can be assigned roles and can be held accountable for completing research-type activities.

PAM provides the framework for independent and small group activities and research. The process also leads to the development of a final product, e.g., a written report, an audiovisual presentation, a role playing scenario, a skit, a live play.

The Proactive Action Model identifies all the parts of an organized inquiry process, and alerts students to the types of things that they must think about - as they plan and then execute their strategies.

In the social studies, PAM can be used to focus students' attention, to keep their interest(s), and to show them what kinds of final projects they can develop.

Working with the science department, social studies teachers can design learning encounters that require students to use PAM in social studies AND science classes. In this way, instruction and learning in one discipline can be used to reinforce/enhance learning in other subjects.

With reference to the M. Hunter lesson design format, PAM compliments FOCUS and GUIDED PRACTICE. PAM provides structure to instructional/learning activities but also provides a degree of freedom to students - as they undertake inquiry/discovery-type activities.

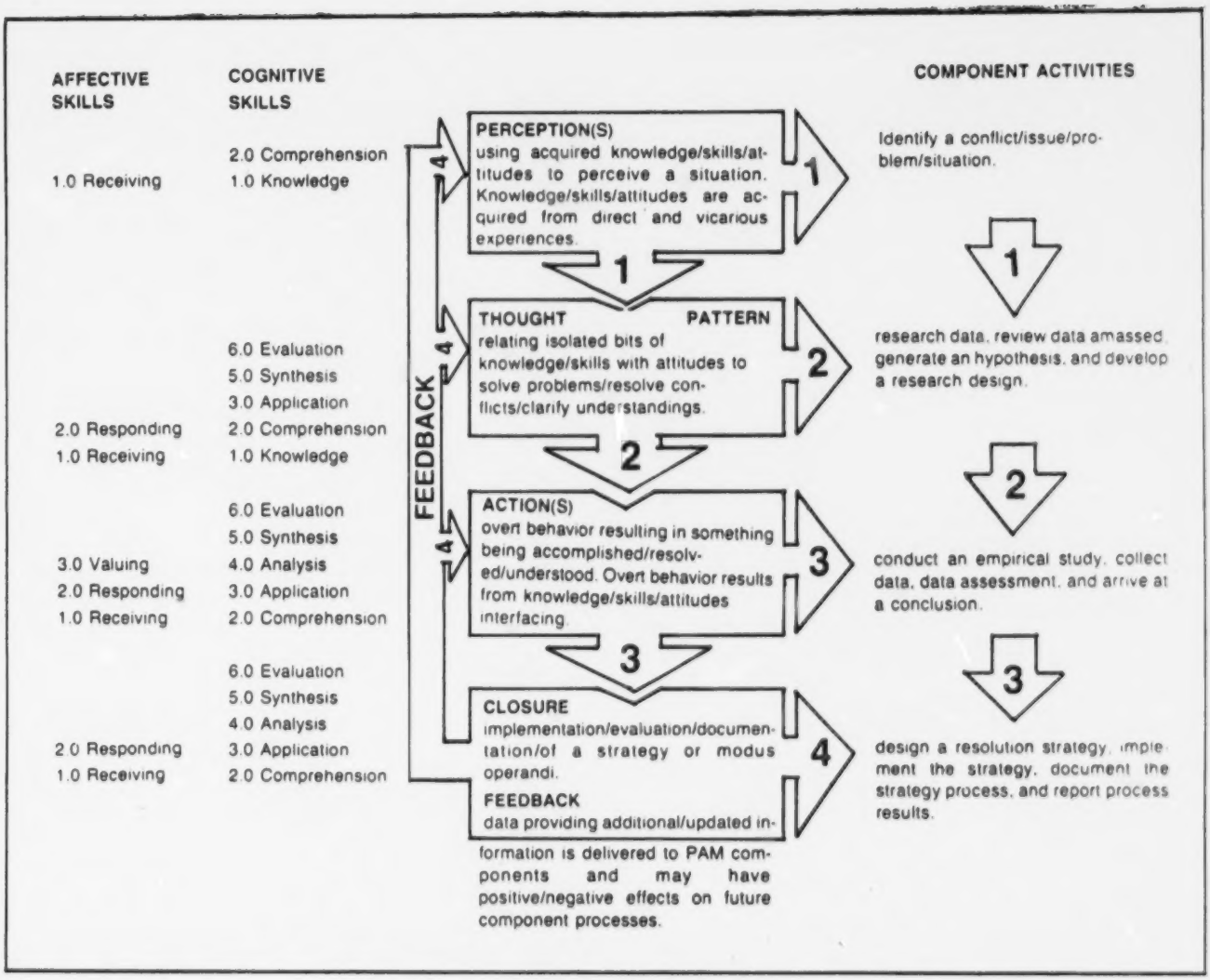
The post-1988 PAM schema considers the structure of cognitive and affective domains of educational objectives. As seen in DIAGRAM I, specific domain objectives are related to the several parts of the PAM process.

Such a blending of the domains with the PAM schema provides a basis for classroom teachers of the social studies to plan activities that will compliment the several levels of each/both domains. By using the PAM schema as a planning guide, teachers can insure that students will gain direct experiences related to the several levels of skills development and achievement.

PAM provides students with a structure or pattern of what the research process looks like. It also identifies for them the parts of that process, and clearly identifies the order in which the steps take place. Thus, students begin to think and act in accordance with the schema 'map'.

In the social studies, PAM can be used to help students 'see' what they are to do, and to 'see' the order in which things are to happen. Looking ahead to step 4; FEEDBACK, students understand that encounters undertaken will have a spin-off effect on their understanding and will also have an impact upon future learning and discoveries. FEEDBACK alerts students to the fact that something will be learned or discovered, and that that 'something' will have an impact upon future learning.

DIAGRAM I



PROACTIVE ACTION MODEL (PAM)

A modified 'scientific method' schema used across the curriculum to promote students' inquiry and holistic thinking - while enhancing critical thinking, decision-making, and problem solving skills development.

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PART II THE SCHEMA NEXUS

The origin of the PROACTIVE ACTION MODEL (PAM) could be found in the 1978-1985 Humans/Environment Learning Program (H/ELP) at Timberlane Regional High School (NH). This author was social studies department chair at TRHS, and the creator of H/ELP and PAM.

H/ELP courses included THIRD WORLD STUDIES, MINORITIES, PEOPLE IN THEIR ENVIRONMENTS, LAW AND SOCIETY, and THE WORLD TODAY.

PAM was formally introduced and discussed in a 1981 ERIC document entitled: TEACHING STUDENTS TO BE PROACTIVE CHANGE AGENTS IN A GLOBAL AGE (ED 207 952).

Writing in the March-April 1982 issue of The Social Studies Teacher[1], this author stated that "a proactive student is an individual who perceives problems, researches problems and analyzes data, critically assesses alternative courses of action, and makes a commitment to act". The Proactive Action Model is used, by students, for purposes of critical thinking and decision-making in real-life as well as in hypothetical situations. PAM is best associated with the homeostasis school of psychological thought which contends that human beings use knowledge and reason to direct their actions. (SEE DIAGRAM I)

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1 "Proactive Students in Global Education," The Social Studies Teacher, March-April 1982, p 4-5.

DIAGRAM I

An Example of the Proactive Action Model Process

PERCEPTION		THOUGHT PATTERN		ACTION
There are tens of thousands of chemical compounds in commercial use, worldwide. If not properly controlled, by the year 2000 all forms of life on Earth will be seriously affected by these poisons.	→	Toxic substances in the environment play a role regarding the incidence of cancer and respiratory ailments in humans, and have negative effects upon natural environments as well.	→	An open-ended role playing scenario in which a legislative committee hears testimony regarding the control of toxic materials. Citizens, interest groups, and commercial organizations present their respective points-of-view. Based upon data collected and testimony heard, the committee makes a policy decision

In 1983,[2] PAM retained the characteristics of the original 1978 model; namely, PERCEPTION, THOUGHT PROCESS, and ACTION. "PAM can be used as the foundation for instructional program development and organization as well as for developing individual student's awareness, perceptions, and critical thinking abilities." (SEE DIAGRAM II)

In the Spring 1984 issue of Southern Social Studies Quarterly,[3] this author stated that "the integrated subject approach brings together divergent concepts, contents, and skills to enhance learning and to solve problems while developing the minds of students to perceive a holistic structure to study. An emphasis is placed on infusing selected elements or properties of each social studies discipline to create a logical study of a given topic for purposes of creating a conceptual bond among the several disciplines of knowledge in the minds of students".

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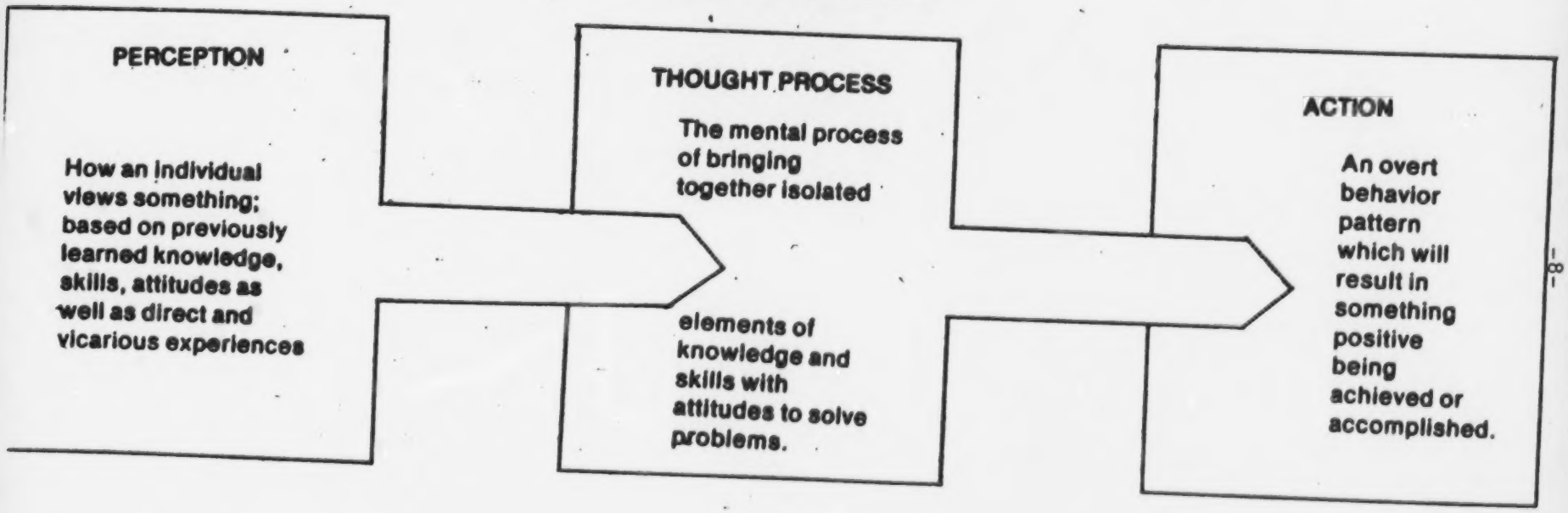
2 "HELP Builds A Global Perspective," MCSS News 'N Notes, February 1983, p 9.

3 "The ECO/SOCIAL Approach to Global Education in the Social Studies Curriculum: K-12," Southern Social Studies Quarterly, February 1984, p 23-35.

DIAGRAM II
PROACTIVE ACTION MODEL


PERCEPTION
How an individual views something; based on previously learned knowledge, skills, attitudes as well as direct and vicarious experiences
THOUGHT PROCESS
The mental process of bringing together isolated
elements of knowledge and skills with attitudes to solve problems.
ACTION
An overt behavior pattern which will result in something positive being achieved or accomplished.

PAM provides for a logical progression of thought and inquiry toward a tangible product (ACTION) as indicated by steps 1-2-3 in the process. Hypothetical situations are the vehicle by which the process is developed, and learned knowledge and skills are applied in simulated situations. PERCEPTIONS-THOUGHTS-ACTIONS may lead to a restructuring of newly acquired knowledge and skills, and into creative frames of reference called CORES. (SEE DIAGRAM III)

CORES can be affective, cognitive, or motor skills domain-based, and can lead the student deeper into the realm of problem identification and solution - as the concrete is replaced by the abstract. CORES requires a greater student manipulation of data in order to achieve creative solutions to problems. This skills requires a solid data base to insure activity success and positive reinforcement.

The student begins to think in terms of WHAT COULD BE or WHAT SHOULD BE. PAM is a vehicle which can be used to promote and encourage mental exercises regarding problem identification and solution.

CORES: Collaborative of Organization and Resources to Expedite Solutions

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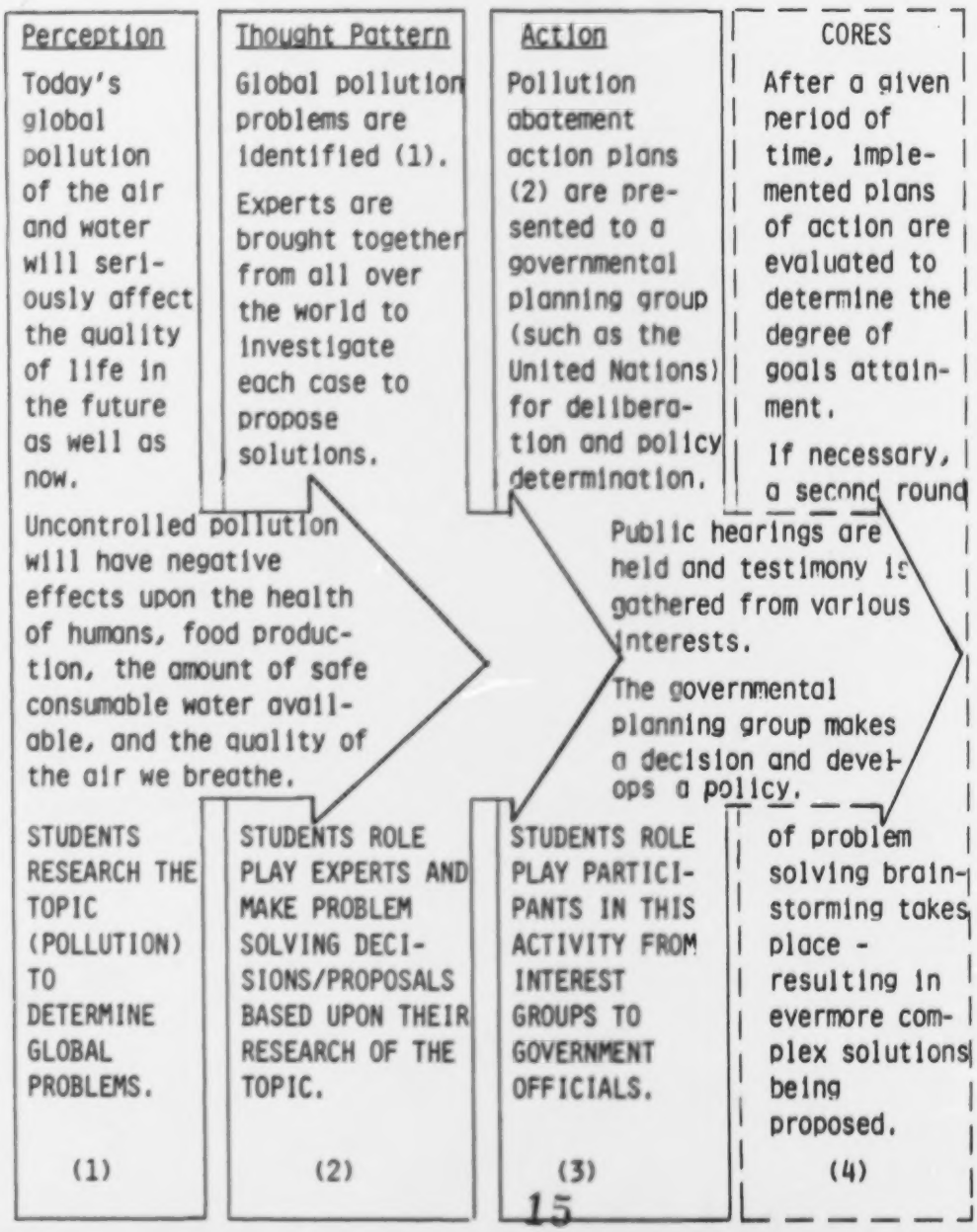
Diagram III

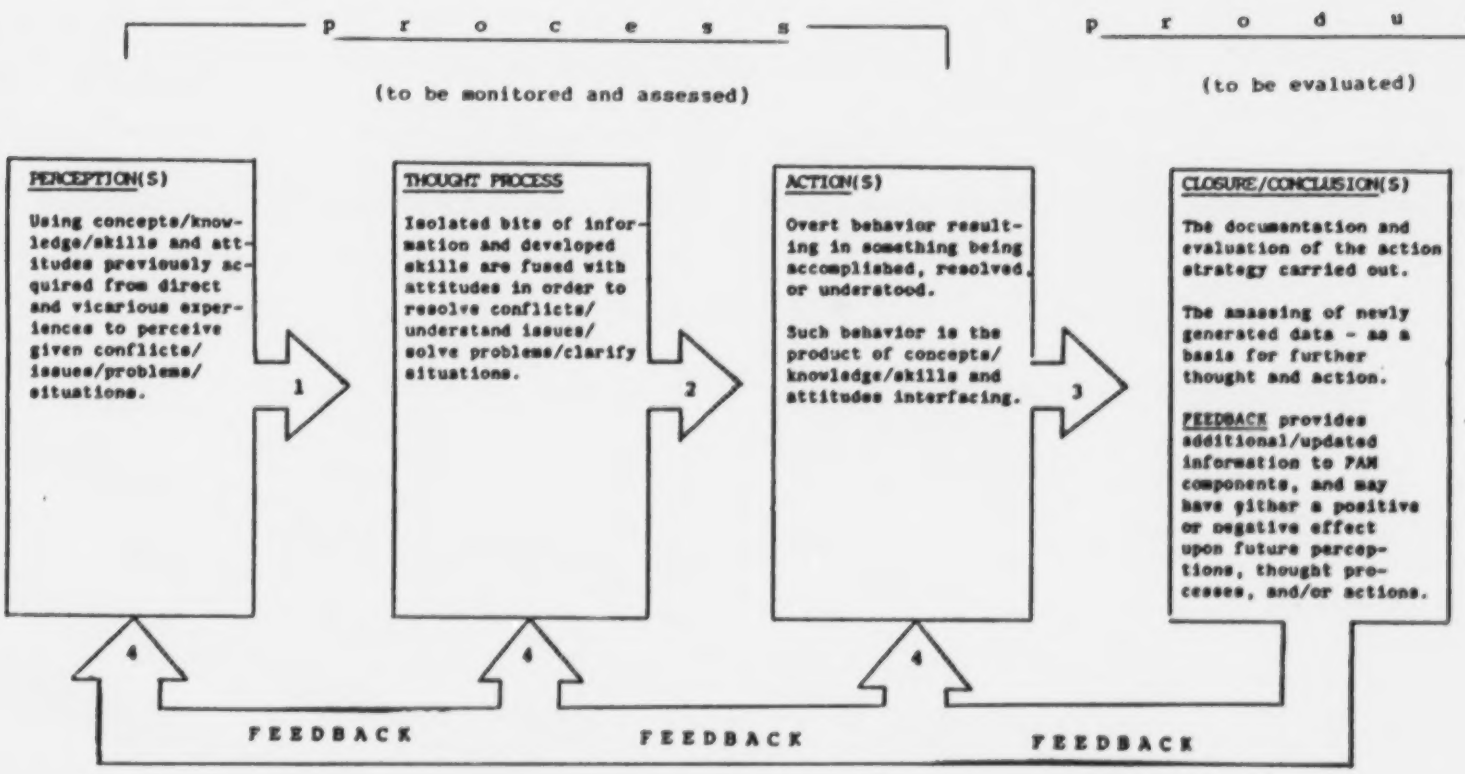
PAM Model Example


Perception
Today's global pollution of the air and water will seriously affect the quality of life in the future as well as now.
Uncontrolled pollution will have negative effects upon the health of humans, food production, the amount of safe consumable water available, and the quality of the air we breathe.
STUDENTS RESEARCH THE TOPIC (POLLUTION) TO DETERMINE GLOBAL PROBLEMS.
(1)
Thought Pattern
Global pollution problems are identified (1).
Experts are brought together from all over the world to investigate each case to propose solutions.
STUDENTS ROLE PLAY EXPERTS AND MAKE PROBLEM SOLVING DECISIONS/PROPOSALS BASED UPON THEIR RESEARCH OF THE TOPIC.
(2)
Action
Pollution abatement action plans (2) are presented to a governmental planning group (such as the United Nations) for deliberation and policy determination.
Public hearings are held and testimony is gathered from various interests.
The governmental planning group makes a decision and develops a policy.
STUDENTS ROLE PLAY PARTICIPANTS IN THIS ACTIVITY FROM INTEREST GROUPS TO GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS.
(3)
CORES
After a given period of time, implemented plans of action are evaluated to determine the degree of goals attainment.
If necessary, a second round of problem solving brainstorming takes place - resulting in evermore complex solutions being proposed.
(4)

From 1981 - 1988, this author wrote about PAM in ERIC documents, e.g., ECO/SOCIAL STUDIES: A STRATEGY TO DEVELOP GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES (ED 207 816), PERCEPTIONS OF YEAR 2000 (ED 212 483), TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY TECHNOLOGY AND THE GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT (ED 213 592), DEVELOPING PROACTIVE ACTION (ED 216 905), FROM FOREIGN AID TO FOREIGN TRADE (ED 218 169), DEVELOPING GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES ABOUT INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS (ED 243 622), ENVIRONMENTS, OUR COMMON HOME: EARTH (ED 267 007), PROBLEM SOLVING FOR THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY (ED 271 332), MODELING TO ENHANCE CRITICAL THINKING AND DECISION MAKING SKILLS DEVELOPMENT (ED 287 781), and COGNITIVE AND AFFECTIVE DOMAIN SKILLS DEVELOPMENT (ED 301 495).

In "Modeling for Effective Skills Development," for The Social Studies Teacher (September-October 1986, p 3+8) this author introduced a new look PAM (SEE DIAGRAM IV). In this schema variation, attention was paid to CLOSURE/ CONCLUSIONS and FEEDBACK. As noted in the model, newly acquired knowledge can have either a positive or negative impact upon perceptions, beliefs, and values.

DIAGRAM IV


p r o c e s s
(to be monitored and assessed)
p r o d u c t
(to be evaluated)
PERCEPTION(S)
Using concepts/knowledge/skills and attitudes previously acquired from direct and vicarious experiences to perceive given conflicts/issues/problems/situations.
1
THOUGHT PROCESS
Isolated bits of information and developed skills are fused with attitudes in order to resolve conflicts/understand issues/solve problems/clarify situations.
2
ACTION(S)
Overt behavior resulting in something being accomplished, resolved, or understood.
Such behavior is the product of concepts/knowledge/skills and attitudes interfacing.
3
CLOSURE/CONCLUSION(S)
The documentation and evaluation of the action strategy carried out.
The assessing of newly generated data - as a basis for further thought and action.
FEEDBACK provides additional/updated information to PAM components, and may have either a positive or negative effect upon future perceptions, thought processes, and/or actions.
4
4
4
FEEDBACK
FEEDBACK
FEEDBACK

PROACTIVE ACTION MODEL (PAM)

A modified 'scientific method' schema used across the curriculum to promote students' inquiry and holistic thinking - while enhancing critical thinking, decision-making, and problem solving skills development.

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In 1988, the PAM schema underwent dramatic change (SEE DIAGRAM V). As discussed in "A Modeling Strategy to Affect Critical Thinking and Decision-Making Skills Development Among Proactive Action Students," (The Master Educator, Winter 1988, p 4-5) the PAM strategy is one way to blend structure and spontaneity into meaningful learning experiences, and to incorporate these experiences into the curriculum and instructional strategies of diverse courses of study.

Functioning as researching social scientists, students mentally jump back-and-forth from specifics to generalities and vice versa. When PAM components are synthesized, the process is an integrated and systematic activity involving the application of acquired concepts, knowledge, and skills to diverse situations.

Any effective and meaningful instructional experience emphasizing learning-by-doing is based on affective and cognitive skills development. Clearly defined and articulated goals/objectives point the way for this systematic development.

The PAM process accomplishes several teaching/learning goals:

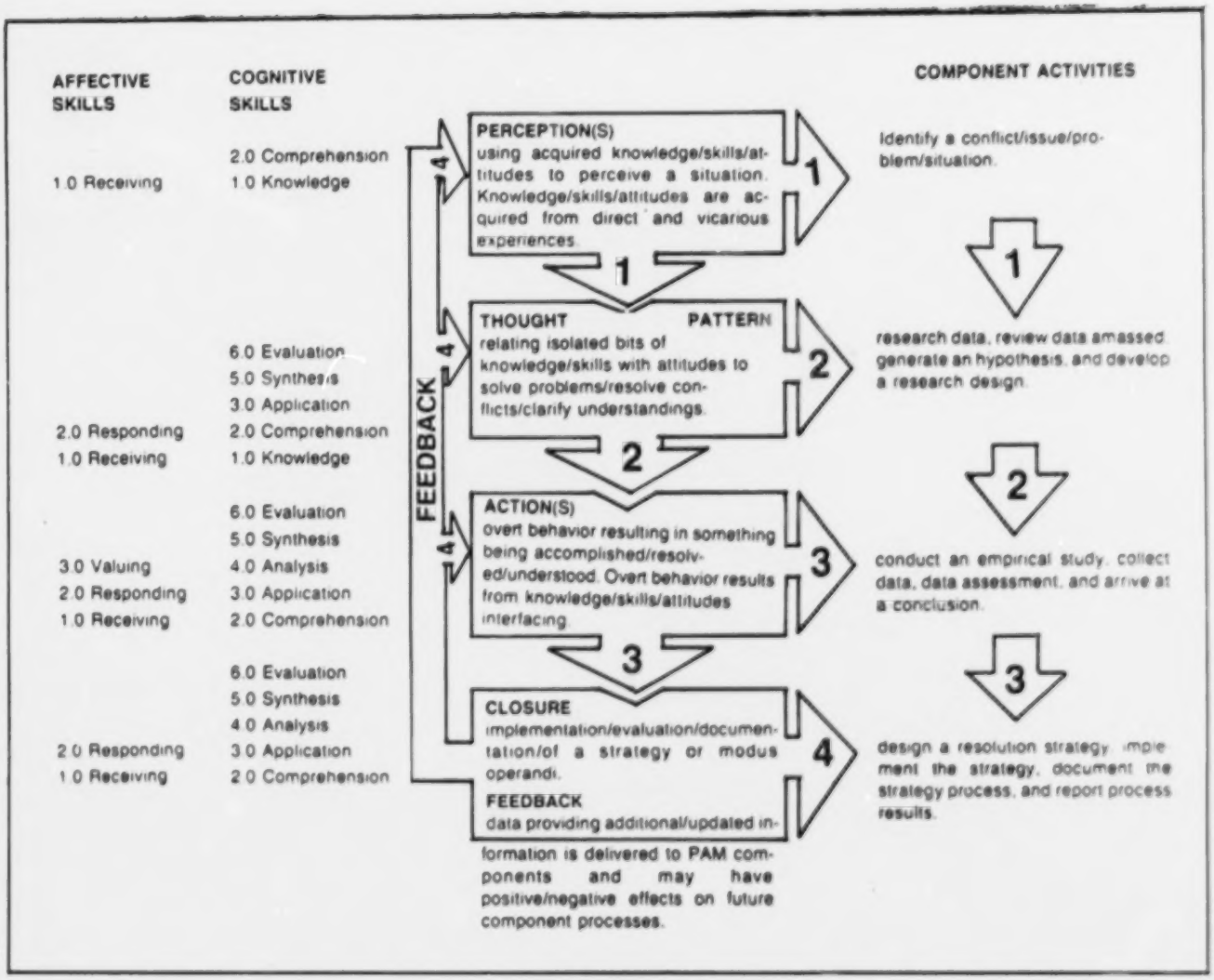
A COMMON METHOD OF INQUIRY allowing students to continually apply, reinforce, and refine creative skills.

STUDENTS PERCEIVE INTERRELATIONSHIPS AMONG/BETWEEN THE SEVERAL SOCIAL SCIENCE DISCIPLINES.

A LEARNING TOOL ONCE MASTERED
THAT CAN BE APPLIED REPEATEDLY
IN A VARIETY OF SETTINGS AND
SITUATIONS BY THE INDIVIDUAL
WITHOUT TUTORIAL SUPERVISION.

A STRATEGY TO ENHANCE FURTHER
INQUIRY as data is collected
and analyzed, decisions are made,
and actions are taken to resolve
conflicts, clarify issues, solve
problems, and to better understand
situations.

DIAGRAM V



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PART III PAM IN ACTION

As noted earlier in this discourse, the PROACTIVE ACTION MODEL can be used across the K-12 curriculum in all the social studies courses.

Whether students are studying state/national/world history, political decision-making, sociological studies of contemporary issues, or economic systems and policies, the PAM schema can be used to inquire and discover - and then used as a basis for products development, e.g., reports, performances, discussions and debates.

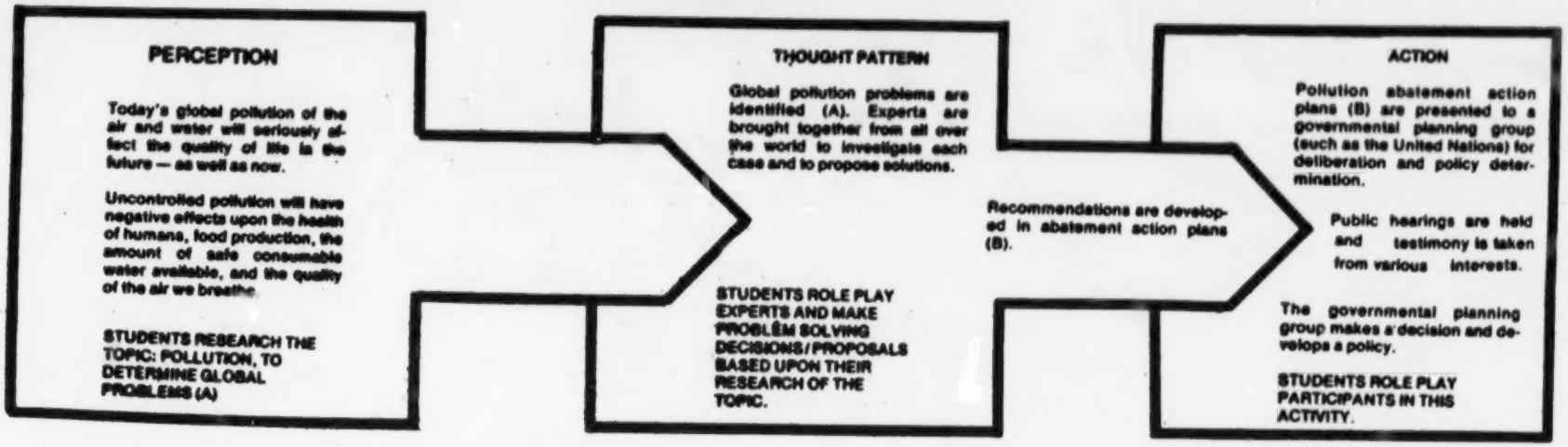
As noted in DIAGRAM I (PAGE 17), the PAM schema is used to investigate global pollution. Students are directly involved in identifying a problem, determining data sources, collecting data, and analyzing their findings.

Data analysis leads to hypothesizing and pondering alternatives courses of action. Decisions are made, and action strategies are designed.

In step #3, students implement their chosen course of action. The change process is monitored and data is collected. Later, data is analyzed and decisions are made re: future action(s).

Using PAM, students realize that they initially use data generated by other researchers - in order for them to hypothesize and plan action strategies. Once these strategies are implemented, as social scientists, THEY begin to generate new data that will later on impact their decisions and the knowledge of others.

DIAGRAM I
PROACTIVE ACTION
MODEL Example


PERCEPTION
Today's global pollution of the air and water will seriously affect the quality of life in the future — as well as now.
Uncontrolled pollution will have negative effects upon the health of humans, food production, the amount of safe consumable water available, and the quality of the air we breathe.
STUDENTS RESEARCH THE TOPIC: POLLUTION, TO DETERMINE GLOBAL PROBLEMS (A)
THOUGHT PATTERN
Global pollution problems are identified (A). Experts are brought together from all over the world to investigate each case and to propose solutions.
STUDENTS ROLE PLAY EXPERTS AND MAKE PROBLEM SOLVING DECISIONS/PROPOSALS BASED UPON THEIR RESEARCH OF THE TOPIC.
Recommendations are developed in abatement action plans (B).
ACTION
Pollution abatement action plans (B) are presented to a governmental planning group (such as the United Nations) for deliberation and policy determination.
Public hearings are held and testimony is taken from various interests.
The governmental planning group makes a decision and develops a policy.
STUDENTS ROLE PLAY PARTICIPANTS IN THIS ACTIVITY.

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CONCEPT — AMERICAN POLITICAL PARTIES

GOAL(S) — Students will:

understand the American two party system.

understand the role of 3rd parties in American political history.

understand the election process.

understand the structure of the Democrat and Republican political parties - grassroots to the national level.

PAM PROCESS

PERCEPTION(S)

Audiovisual presentations will introduce students to American political parties throughout the nation's history - from the Whigs and Tories to Ross Perot.

Students select and read accounts of political figures in American history, political parties, and political events, e.g., Profiles in Courage (JFK).

Political figures, elected officials, political party workers, newspaper writers, etc. discuss American political parties and party politics with students.

THOUGHT PATTERN(S)

Students research the political history of the community/area - researching old newspapers and books, and interviewing older community citizens.

Students attend political party meetings and rallies.

Students collect/read political party platforms and literature.

ACTION(S)

Students volunteer to work for political candidates of personal choice.

Students create political parties, write platforms, field slates of candidates, conduct political campaigns, and hold mock elections.

Students select campaign issues and study the position of the several candidates/parties on each issue.

Letters are written to the editor of the community/area newspaper(s).

CLOSURE

Students tabulate the votes cast in the mock election for the several candidates/parties.

Students analyze the results of political elections in the community/area, state, and nation.

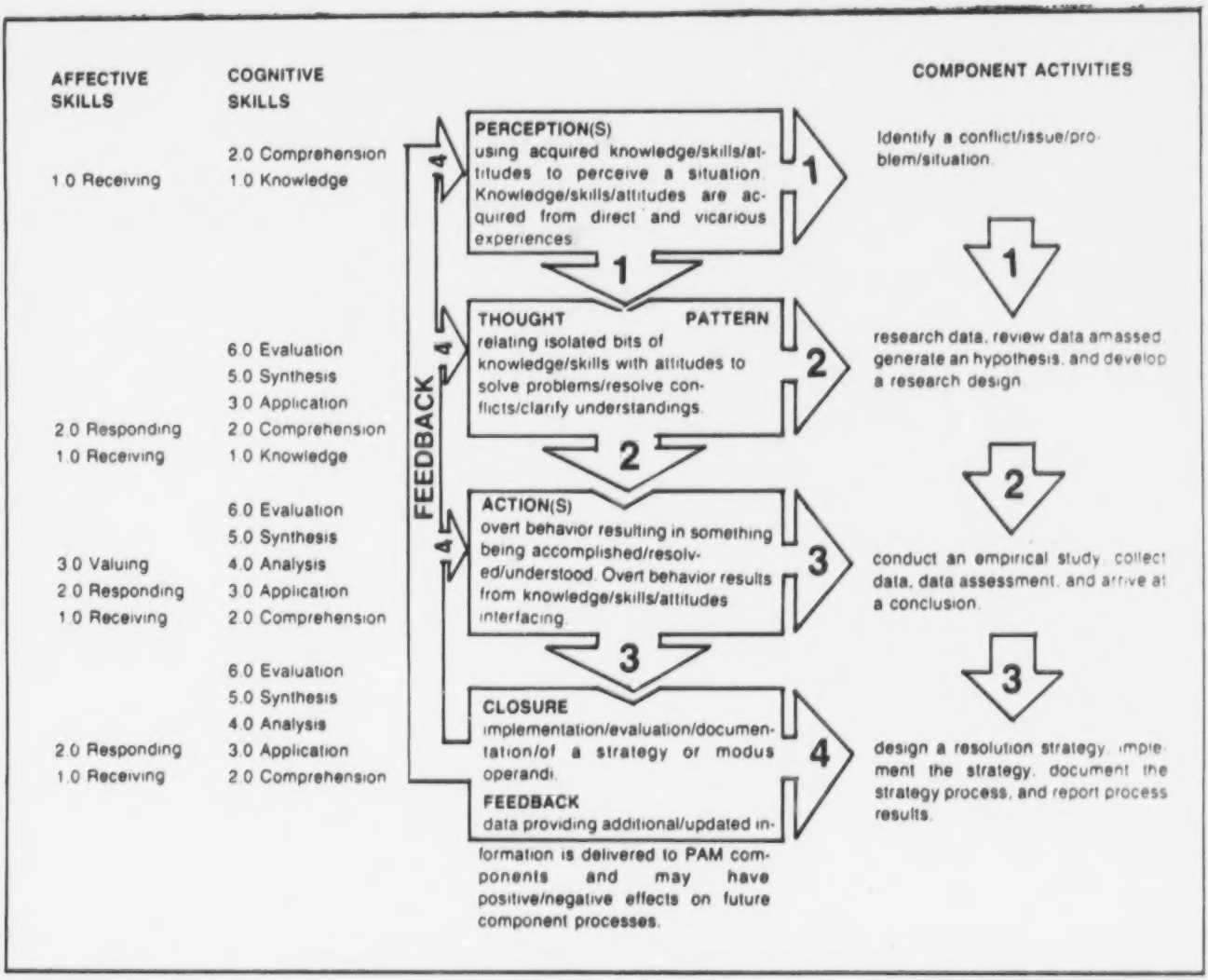
Students interview newly-elected officials.

FEEDBACK

Data collected from the results of local/area, state and national elections are blended with prior knowledge to heighten students' understanding of the American political process.

CONCEPT: AMERICAN POLITICAL PARTIES

CONCEPT: FREE ENTERPRISE SYSTEM



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CONCEPT — FREE ENTERPRISE SYSTEM

GOAL(S) — Students will:

- understand the characteristics of a free enterprise system.
- understand profit motive.
- understand private ownership of property/business.
- understand the principle of competition.
- understand the concept of goods and services.
- understand the concept of supply and demand.

PAM PROCESS

PERCEPTION(S)

- Audiovisual presentations will introduce students to the American free enterprise system of economics.
- Students select and read accounts of Americans who benefited from the free enterprise system.
- Students will compare the American free enterprise system with other economic systems.
- Local/area business people will discuss the benefits of the free enterprise system with students.

THOUGHT PATTERN(S)

- Students research the history of the American free enterprise system.
- Students read about the robber barons in American history.
- Students read about the rise of labor unions in America.

Students watch CNN, CNBC, NBC, ABC, CBS and other networks for business news, Wall Street reports, and analyses of the stock market.

Students read daily and weekly accounts of the economy in newspapers and magazines.

ACTION(S)

Students interview local business people to determine the success of the free enterprise system in their lives.

Students compare the profits of large (national) businesses with local (MOM and POP) operations.

Students visit stores and businesses to observe operations first-hand.

Students create a corporation and issue stock. The day-to-day operations of the company are acted out.

CLOSURE

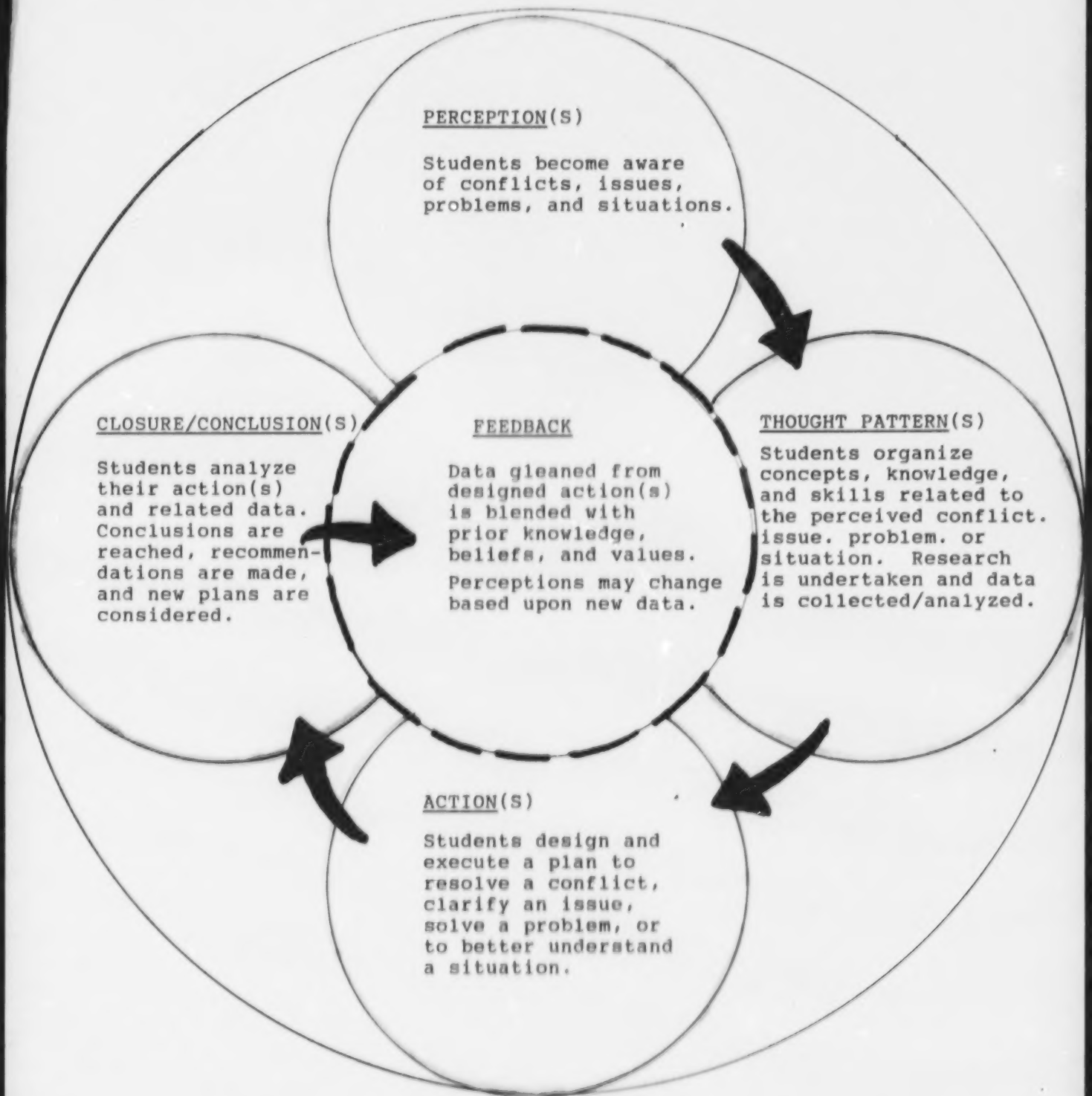
Students document the ups-and-downs of the stock market for a given period of time.

Students report on the success of the company they created and operated.

Students report on the economic health of the local community/area.

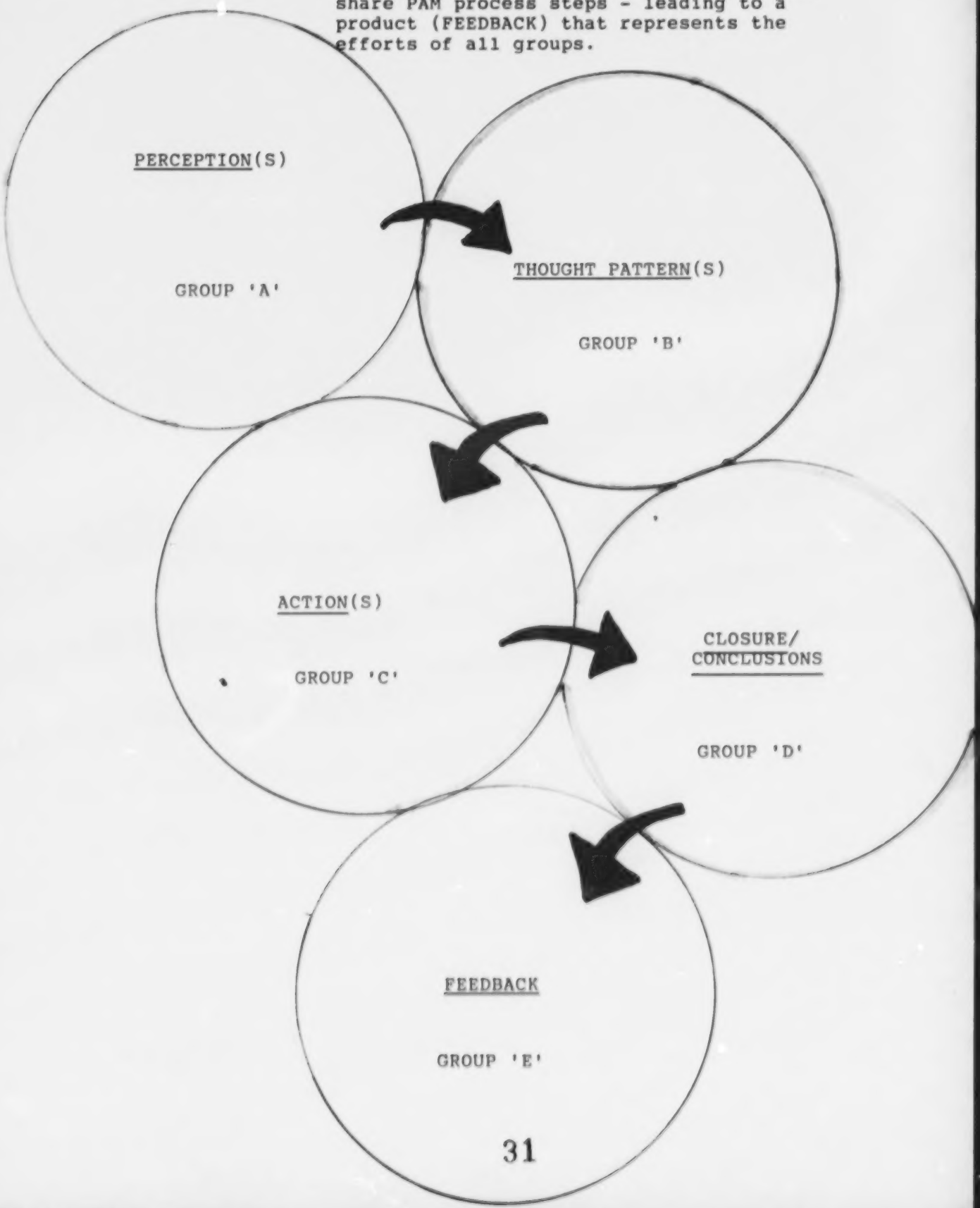
FEEDBACK

Students blend information gained first-hand from activities in the community with prior knowledge of the free enterprise system.


PERCEPTION(S)
Students become aware of conflicts, issues, problems, and situations.
THOUGHT PATTERN(S)
Students organize concepts, knowledge, and skills related to the perceived conflict. issue. problem. or situation. Research is undertaken and data is collected/analyzed.
ACTION(S)
Students design and execute a plan to resolve a conflict, clarify an issue, solve a problem, or to better understand a situation.
CLOSURE/CONCLUSION(S)
Students analyze their action(s) and related data. Conclusions are reached, recommendations are made, and new plans are considered.
FEEDBACK
Data gleaned from designed action(s) is blended with prior knowledge, beliefs, and values.
Perceptions may change based upon new data.

In cooperative learning groups, students can share the roles related to the several PAM process steps.

Several cooperative learning groups could share PAM process steps - leading to a product (FEEDBACK) that represents the efforts of all groups.



AN ECO/SOCIAL STUDIES APPROACH

Students involved in ECO/SOCIAL STUDIES can use the PAM schema to inquire/discover and collect data relevant to encounters related to the natural/physical and social sciences.

FOR EXAMPLE:

> In social studies class, students are engaged in PAM process steps 1-2; PERCEPTION(S) and THOUGHT PATTERN(S) as they inquire about the causes and effects of pollution on the lifespace environment of the local community.

SOCIAL STUDIES

PERCEPTION(S)

- Students are taken to selected sites in the community to observe causes/effects of pollution.
- Students view audiovisual presentations that introduce them to global pollution causes/effects.
- Students read newspaper and magazine accounts of pollution nearby/close to home and distant/far-removed.

THOUGHT PATTERN(S)

- Students meet with community resource people to discuss pollution causes/effects in the local community/area.
- Students read accounts of how other communities have dealt with pollution.
- Students think about ways by which pollution causes/effects in the local community can be combatted.

With data in-hand, students are engaged in PAM process steps 3-4 in science class.

FOR EXAMPLE:

SCIENCE

ACTION(S)

Students design a strategy to combat littering in the local community.

Posters are made, pamphlets are printed, and students take to the streets - to conduct a community awareness campaign.

Students organize a weekend litter clean-up program. Parents and other concerned citizens sign-up to help students clean-up designated areas in the community.

CLOSURE/CONCLUSION(S)

Students record clean-up activities on film or video tape. BEFORE and AFTER type evidence of the action(s) taken.

Over the course of the school year, students revisit the site to observe the condition of the site(s) and to record these 'conditions' on film or tape.

FEEDBACK

The success of the planned activities and community efforts provide a basis for future action(s), and indicate to students - a preferred way to conduct future activities.